

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY MADRID IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY RABAT IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 178001

EXDIS

FOL RPT NOUAKCHOTT 1923 ACTION SECSTATE 12 JUL 78 QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L NOUAKCHOTT 1923

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT MR,

SUBJ: MEETING WITH MAURITANIAN PRESIDENT MOUSTAPHA OULD MOHAMED
SALECK

REF: A. STATE 175454, B. NOUAKCHOTT 1873

1. SUMMARY: PRESIDENT MOUSTAPHA OULD MOHAMED SALECK MADE A
PERSONAL APPEAL FOR US GOOD OFFICES IN SEEKING PEACEFUL
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SOLUTION TO SAHARA CONFLICT. HE ALSO MADE PLEA FOR CONTINUED
AND INCREASED ECONOMIC SUPPORT AND CLOSER POLITICAL RELATIONS.
END SUMMARY.

2. PRESIDENT MOUSTAPHA RECEIVED ME FOR 45 MINUTES JULY 12.
DRESSED AS USUAL IN HIS CAMOUFLAGE PARATROOPER FATIGUES, HE
GREETED ME VERY WARMLY AND AFTER A BRIEF PERIOD OF PICTURE

TAKING GOT RIGHT DOWN TO THE POINT. HE DIVIDED HIS CONVERSATION INTO THREE PARTS:

- A. WHY THE COUP?
- B) WHAT DOES THE NEW GOVERNMENT EXPECT TO DO?
- C) CAN THE USG HELP US?

3. MOUSTAPHA STATED THAT THE TAKEOVER BY THE MILITARY COMMITTEE WAS IN FACT A QUOTE COUNTER-COUP UNQUOTE TO HEAD OFF A BLOODY REVOLUTION OF THE MASSES THAT HE AND COLLEAGUES CONSIDERED OTHERWISE INEVITABLE. HE SAID THAT FORMER PRESIDENT OULD DADDAH WAS A GOOD MAN AND WELL-INTENTIONED, BUT WAS NEVER ABLE TO BRING INTO PRACTICE ANY SEMBLANCE OF SOCIAL ORDER, UNIVERSAL JUSTICE AND EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION OF RESOURCES. HE GAVE AS AN EXAMPLE OF OULD DADDAH'S INEPTITUDE, AND HIS GOVERNMENT'S VENALITY, THE CROWDED CONDITIONS OF NOUAKCHOTT AND OTHER URBAN CENTERS. WHY HAVE THESE MISERABLE PEOPLE FLED TO NOUAKCHOTT? IT IS BECAUSE THEY KNOW THEY HAD NO POSSIBILITY OF OBTAINING ESSENTIAL SOCIAL SERVICES WHILE LIVING IN THE INTERIOR. HE CITED ENTIRE GEOGRAPHIC REGIONS THAT WERE WITHOUT MEDICAL FACILITIES AND LARGE AREAS THAT HAD NO SCHOOLS. HE CITED EXAMPLES OF REGIONAL AND DISTRICT ADMINISTRATORS WHO NOT ONLY HAD NO INTEREST IN PERFORMING THEIR FUNCTIONS BUT WERE ACTUALLY STEALING FROM THE MASSES. HE SAID IT APPEARED TO HIM AND HIS COLLEAGUES THAT MAURITANIA UNDER OULD DADDAH HAD BEEN DROWNING FOR THE PAST 20 YEARS AND THAT WHEN SOMEONE CANNOT SWIM HE CANNOT SAVE HIMSELF; SOMEONE ELSE HAS TO FISH

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HIM OUT.

4. WHAT DOES THE NEW GOVERNMENT EXPECT TO DO?
- A) GET THE IRON ORE MOVING AGAIN AND INTO THE WORLD MARKET.
 - B) REVITALIZE AND GIVE DIRECTION TO THE ADMINISTRATION AND RESTORE THE CONFIDENCE OF BUSINESS MEN. HE WENT ON TO TALK ABOUT THE NEED TO INVITE OVERSEAS INVESTMENT AND STATED THAT HE WAS SURE THAT MAURITANIA HAD MANY FRIENDS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD WHO ARE SENSITIVE TO ITS PROBLEMS AND READY AND WILLING TO PARTICIPATE IN A FREE ECONOMY.
 - C) FIND A PEACEFUL SOLUTION TO THE WESTERN SAHARA CONFLICT.

5. CONCENTRATING THEN ON THE THIRD ITEM, HE QUALIFIED THE REQUEST MADE BY ISMAEL OULD AMAR AS FOLLOWS:
- A) REGARDING ANY USG DEMARCHE TO THE ALGERIANS, HE STATED THAT HE HOPED WE WOULD SEE FIT TO TREAT THIS AS A USG SUGGESTION RATHER THAN AS THE TRANSMISSION OF A MAURITANIAN OVERTURE.
 - B) HE STATED HE REALIZED HE HAD A SERIOUS PROBLEM IN WEDDING HIS DESIRE FOR PEACE WITH HIS OTHER OBJECTIVE OF MAINTAINING CLOSE AND CORDIAL RELATIONS WITH MOROCCA. HE

CONFIDED THAT HE HAD NO READY ANSWER AND NO SUGGESTIONS FOR US TO MAKE TO THE MOROCCANS. HE HOPED, HOWEVER, THAT WE AS THE MOST INFULENTIAL COUNTRY IN THE WORLD COULD COME UP WITH A FORMULA THAT WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE TO ALL CONCERNED. HE MADE IT CLEAR THAT HIS GOVERNMENT HAD NO DESIRE TO HOLD ON TO A WORTHLESS TRACT OF SAND IF ITS INHABITANTS DID NOT WISH TO BE PART OF MAURITANIA.

6. IN ANSWER TO MY DIRECT QUESTION, HE STATEE THAT HIS GOVERNMENT HAD NOT TESTED ITS DESIRE TO END THE WAR WITH THE MOROCCANS, NOR HAS IT HAD ANY DIRECT CONTACT WITH THE ALGERIANS.

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7. REGARDING FORMAL RECOGNITION I USED THE AUTHORITY CONTAINED IN REFTEL A. HE EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT NOT ONLY WOULD OUR RELATIONS CONTINUE AS THEY HAD BEFORE BUT THAT AS A CONSEQUENCE OF OUR MEETING THEY WOULD BE GREATLY EXPANDED, NOT ONLY IN THE AREA OF ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE WHERE WE HAVE BEEN SO HELPFUL IN THE PAST, BUT ALSO IN TERMS OF CLOSER POLITICAL COOPERATION.

8. HE WOUND UP THE MEETING WITH AN APPEAL FOR ANY ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE THAT WE AND ANY FRIENDLY NATION COULD PROVIDE. HE CONFIRMED THAT THE COUNTRY WAS ABSOLUTELY BANKRUPT AND WITHOUT HELP WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO MEET CURRENT GOVERNMENT PAYROLLS.

9. MOUSTAPHA ALSO MADE FOLLOWING POINTS DURING MEETING:

A) GOM PRIME MINISTER OSMAN DID NOT COME TO MAURITANIA AS HAD BEEN RUMORED, AND REPORTED AS SUCH IN A PREVIOUS TELEGRAM. IN FACT, VISITOR WAS A FORMER PRIME MINISTER (PRESUMABLE REDA GUEDIRA) WHO RUSHED IN IMMEDIATELY TO OBTAIN ASSURANCES THAT MAURITANIANS WOULD NOT IMMEDIATELY SEEK A SEPARATE PEACE WITH THE ALGERIANS.

B) MAURITANIANS HAVE NOT ASKED THE FRENCH TO PLAY A MEDIATORY ROLE.

C) HE ASSURED ME THAT HE WAS FULLY AWARE OF OULD AMAR'S CONVERSATIONS WITH ME (REFTEL B) AND ENCOURAGED ME TO CONTINUE TO USE THIS CHANNEL.

D) ALONG WITH HIS FAREWELL HANDSHAKE HE EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT OUR NEXT MEETING WOULD BE SOON AND WOULD BE AT MY INITIATIVE AFTER RECEIVING INSTRUCTIONS FROM MY GOVERNMENT.

10. COMMENT: GIVEN MOUSTAPHA'S QUALIFICATION OF OULD AMAR'S REMARKS, BELIEVE WE SHOULD DELAY ANY APPROACH TO
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ALGERIANS RE MAURITANIAN INTENTIONS UNTIL WE HAVE TAKEN
SOUNDINGS WITH MOROCCANS.
POLISARIO PROVISIONAL CEASEFIRE ANNOUNCEMENT REPORTED ON FRENCH
RADIO WOULD APPEAR TO INDICATE
WILLINGNESS ON ALGERIAN PART TO ENTER INTO SERIOUS NEGOTIA-
TIONS, AND WE SHOULD THEREFORE NOT ALLOW MAURITANIAN INITIATIVE
TO DIE ON VINE. ON OTHER HAND, IT IS POSSIBLE THAT ALGERIAN
INTENTION IS SIMPLY TO SPLIT MAURITANIAN-MOROCCAN ALLIANCE,
SOMETHING MAURITANIANS NATURALLY SEEK AT ALL COSTS TO AVOID.
IN SUCH A SITUATION, PREMATURE ACTION ON OUR PART WOULD
ALMOST CERTAINLY DO GRAVE DAMAGE TO OUR RELATIONS WITH
MOROCCO.

11. THUS, IT SEEMS TO US THAT WE MUST FIND OUT WHERE
MOROCCANS STAND AND THEN FOLLOW UP QUICKLY WITH MAURITANIANS.
IN DOING SO, WE WOULD BE BEGINNING TO MOVE INTO MEDIATORY
ROLE. AT THIS JUNCTURE, WE SENSE THERE IS A BASIS FOR
TAKING ON THE TASK. END COMMENT.

12. ACTION REQUESTED: THAT DEPARTMENT PASS THIS CABLE TO
EMBASSIES ALGIERS, MADRID, PARIS AND RABAT AND INFORM US
WHEN THIS DONE. KRYZA

UNQUOTE CHRISTOPHER

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